DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 313 088 JC 900 003

TITLE	Faculty Excellence at Miami-Dade Community College.
INSTITUTION	Miami-Dade Community Coll. District, FL.
PUB DATE	Oct 88
NOTE	13p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Educational Quality; *Interpersonal Competence; *Knowledge Level; Learning Processes; Student Motivation; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Motivation; Teacher Responsibility; Teaching Styles; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Miami Dade Community College FL

ABSTRACT

The qualities and characteristics of excellent faculty at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) are described in this paper. First, an underlying set of assumptions is presented, stressing that the qualities identified as representative of faculty excellence apply equally to classroom teachers, librarians, counselors, and other non-teaching faculty, and that the paper is intended to be neither a job description nor an evaluation instrument. The definitional statements indicate that: (1) with respect to their own motivation and their ability to motivate others, excellent faculty are enthusiastic about their work, set challenging individual and collective performance goals for themselves and their students, are committed to education as a profession, project a positive attitude about students' ability to learn, and display ethical professional behavior; (2) in terms of their interpersonal skills, excellent faculty treat all individuals with respect, appreciate diverse talents, work collaboratively with colleagues, are available to students and listen attentively to what they say, are responsive to student needs, are fair in their evaluation of student progress, present ideas clearly, and create a climate conducive to learning; (3) with regard to their knowledge base, these faculty are knowledgeable about their profession, their discipline, and learning processes; integrate current subject matter into their work; respect diverse views; and are well prepared and well organized; and (4) with respect to applying their knowledge, excellent faculty provide students with alternative ways of learning, stimulate intellectual curiosity, encourage independent thinking and analytical listening, provide cooperative learning opportunities, give prompt and constructive feedback, attend to feedback from students and others, and provide clear and substantial evidence that students have learned. (JMC)

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ED313088

Faculty Excellence at Miami-Dade Community College

Adopted by
the Miami-Dade Community College
District Board of Trustees
October, 1988

JC900003

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FACULTY EXCELLENCE AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The qualities and characteristics of excellent faculty at Miami-Dade Community College are described in four categories: their own motivation and their ability to motivate others, their interpersonal skills, their knowledge base, and their skill at applying that knowledge.

ASSUMPTIONS

A set of assumptions undergirds and provides context for this description of faculty excellence.

1. **The qualities identified as representative of faculty excellence apply equally to teaching and to non-teaching faculty.** For teaching faculty, they apply both to classroom and non-classroom activities. The qualities are described in general terms in order to relate to all faculty members; thus, to determine specific applications for individuals, further definition and elaboration will occur at the department level.
2. **This description of excellence is not intended to be a job description.** Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade make many contributions to the College, by developing curriculum and new programs, through community involvement, by serving on committees and task forces, and by recruiting students, among other activities. The qualities of excellence highlighted in this report, however, focus specifically on the teaching/learning interrelationship, the foundation of any faculty member's professional activities.
3. **This definition of faculty excellence is not designed as an evaluation instrument.** However, the qualities of which it is composed have been identified by Miami-Dade faculty, administrators and students as significant in promoting student success. Therefore, any evaluation system devised should be based on this definition.

MOTIVATION

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade Community College are dedicated to their teaching profession in higher education and to the community college philosophy as defined at Miami-Dade. Their greatest concern is for student learning; thus, they themselves are highly motivated to achieve excellence and strive to motivate students to reach their educational and personal goals.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are enthusiastic about their work. Faculty members, administrators, and students all regard enthusiasm as a primary motivational factor. Teaching faculty manifest this enthusiasm in a variety of ways. They communicate their deep interest in their discipline fields and the satisfaction they themselves have gained through increasing their knowledge. Other faculty demonstrate their enthusiasm in their professional areas by willingly working in a personal way with students or prospective students to help them achieve their goals. These faculty members share with students and colleagues the rewards of their involvement in their professional organizations and associations. They build in students a sense of accomplishment when they demonstrate their learning and they instill in them both the desire and self-confidence needed to increase their learning. In short, they communicate the values and satisfactions to be gained in the teaching and learning activity.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade set challenging individual and collective performance goals for themselves. These goals address not only classroom activities and other specific academic responsibilities, but also the many other areas of professional involvement. They continually strive to increase their own knowledge and to perfect their job-related skills, practices, and procedures. In so doing, they serve as positive role models for both students and colleagues.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade also set challenging performance goals for students. They communicate to students that progress is not made without a cost; it must be paid for in time and effort. Thus, they encourage students to overcome their limitations and to each beyond their current achievements in an attempt to fulfill all of their potential.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are committed to education as a profession. They value their work highly because of the intrinsic satisfaction they receive from knowing they have helped students to learn and to succeed in their lives. Regardless of circumstances, commitment to their students does not waver.

Excellent faculty, who are committed to the mission and values of Miami-Dade, project a positive attitude about students' ability to learn. The open door policy and all its negative connotations of students' aptitudes and abilities notwithstanding, these outstanding faculty have a strong belief that students can learn and they challenge them accordingly. This belief is, no doubt, a motivating factor for both students and faculty members.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade display behavior consistent with professional ethics. They are aware that students and others are apt to make judgments about the teaching profession on the basis of their own behavior. They are also aware that a failure to commit to professional standards weakens the profession. Thus, these faculty members maintain the most professional and ethical professor/student relationships. They guard against displays of bias or prejudice which may detract from the teaching/learning process.

Finally, excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade regard students as individuals operating in a broader perspective beyond the classroom. As educators in the truest and broadest sense, they are concerned with the many aspects of students as unique individuals, not just students in their role as learners in classrooms. Accordingly they provide counsel and assistance whenever appropriate.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade Community College interact actively and positively with students and with their colleagues. In their interaction with students, staff, and colleagues on campus, and with community members and business, civic and governmental representatives off campus, their professional interpersonal skills are evident.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade treat all individuals with respect. This respect characterizes all of their dealings with students, but especially when they admonish or correct them. This professional attitude is critical when they interact with students, colleagues and members of the community.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade respect diverse talents. They recognize that students have different strengths and weaknesses, have different learning styles, and bring different skills and backgrounds to the teaching/learning process. Consequently, they encourage students to develop their individual abilities in learning situations.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade work collaboratively with colleagues. They know the importance of bringing their collective strengths to deal with departmental, campus and College issues in order to achieve excellence in the teaching and learning process. Their collaborative efforts serve as a model for students both inside and outside the classroom.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are available to students. They realize that student contact with faculty members outside the classroom is critical to the success of the majority of Miami-Dade students. Hence, they provide students ample opportunities for such contact and encourage students to meet and interact with them.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade listen attentively to what students say. They are sensitive to nonverbal as well as verbal cues, including careful analyses of students' written responses. They pay particular attention to student evaluations and feedback in critiquing and improving their own performance.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are responsive to student needs. They realize that students, in addition to needing academic support, often need encouragement and individual attention as they try to adjust to the varied demands in their lives. Excellent faculty members can also distinguish legitimate, positive responses to student needs from inappropriate responses. They are careful to maintain a professional approach in their interactions with students.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are fair in their evaluations of student progress. They do not allow subjective opinions to interfere with student evaluations. On the contrary, they follow carefully the evaluation criteria which they provide to all students at the beginning of each term.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade present ideas clearly. They are good transmitters as well as good receivers of messages. Faculty members and students agree that communicating ideas clearly is one of the most critical interpersonal skills.

Finally, excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade create a climate that is conducive to learning. They know that the atmosphere in the learning environment can have a great impact on student learning. They are also aware that a genuine sense of humor may help develop positive teacher/student relationships. They have the ability to see situations in a humorous light and to put them into proper perspective. They use humor to promote student learning, never to be demeaning or vindictive.

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade Community College have the intellectual skills and knowledge requisite for superlative performance. They have a thorough understanding not only of their own work areas and disciplines, but also of how students learn. This knowledge base is essential in their work within the context of Miami-Dade's open admissions policy.

Fundamental to excellence, according to faculty members, administrators, and students, is that faculty at Miami-Dade are knowledgeable about their work areas and disciplines. This knowledge includes not only the content of the disciplines, but also their roles in their departments and their campus in support of the overall teaching and learning process. These faculty members also share their knowledge with one another in a collegial effort to achieve excellence. There is no substitute for faculty members having in-depth knowledge of their fields and disciplines in order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge to students. Without substantial knowledge in their fields, faculty members are ill-prepared to foster student learning, even if their motivational techniques and interpersonal skills are sound.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade are knowledgeable about how students learn. They understand established principles of learning which serve as a foundation for their work with students as they advise, teach and provide learning support. This knowledge encompasses the many differences in students which, in part, stem from the great cultural diversity found on the Miami-Dade campuses.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade integrate current subject matter into their work. Students should have information and the results of research and study which reflect the latest work in the field. Excellent faculty members consistently update their own knowledge and teaching materials to make their instruction meaningful, timely, and refreshing to their students.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade also provide perspectives that include a respect for diverse views. They provide a variety of theories and interpretations that represent the best thinking in their fields. Moreover, they demonstrate to their students an openness and willingness to communicate and share differing views. These excellent faculty members are particularly sensitive to Miami-Dade's diverse student body which represents a wide variety of cultures and academic traditions.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade do their work in a well-prepared and well-organized manner. They have clear learning goals and plan activities so that students not only master content material but also understand the ways of processing and applying information. Instructors focus on the most important knowledge, proceed logically from one subject to the next, and use time effectively so that students learn as much as possible. Other faculty provide assistance to students in a clear manner so that they know and can use the College's educational systems as effectively as possible.

APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE BASE

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade Community College not only know well their own professional work areas and established principles of learning, but they also put these principles of learning into practice as they carry out their responsibilities related to the teaching and learning process. They continue to seek ways to meet individual needs of students and to help students learn as effectively and efficiently as possible.

With regard to teaching procedures, excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade provide students with alternative ways of learning. This implies that they understand different learning styles and analyze the effectiveness of different teaching strategies. Instructors try to match students' individual learning styles by employing a variety of teaching strategies as far as possible, given the limitations of the classroom environment. They help students discover their own most effective ways of learning and plan their educational programs and individual study accordingly.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade stimulate intellectual curiosity. They develop provocative presentations and activities, while keeping the subject at an appropriate level of difficulty. This suggests an active learning environment in which students are not merely passive observers.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade also encourage independent thinking. As students develop independence in acquiring, analyzing, and assessing knowledge, they are able to take more responsibility for their own learning. Thus, the faculty members' role becomes less that of communicator of information and more that of mentor who guides students in their pursuit of learning. These outstanding faculty members understand that students must develop independent thinking in order to make the most productive use of their talents and abilities.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade encourage students to be analytical listeners. To develop their students' intellectual curiosity and independent thinking, they provide opportunities for students to analyze carefully what they hear. As students listen more carefully and more critically, they will be able to engage in more mature conceptual thinking.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade provide cooperative learning opportunities for students. In recognition of current research on learning, they plan learning strategies that promote collaborative study among students. Some students are more able to teach and learn some content from one another than directly from an instructor. As students understand that learning is properly a collaborative, rather than a competitive activity, the entire educational process at Miami-Dade will be enhanced.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade give constructive feedback promptly to students. They understand that timely feedback that promotes positive action is most useful to students. Thus, they use various means to respond to students in a timely manner.

Excellent faculty members at Miami-Dade give consideration to feedback from students and others. These faculty members know the importance of analyzing and evaluating their own performance. Thus, feedback from students, from other faculty members, and from observers of their performance, is welcomed as positive resources for their own improvement. Excellent faculty members use this feedback to make immediate adjustments that will improve student learning.

Finally, excellent faculty members provide clear and substantial evidence that students have learned. This evidence is both for students to have accurate and realistic appraisals of their performance, and for the faculty members themselves, as professionals, to know the effectiveness of their work. To acquire this evidence, excellent faculty members first establish clear objectives and performance standards. With this positive evidence, excellent faculty members can enjoy the professional and personal satisfaction of work well done.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

MOTIVATION

EXCELLENT FACULTY MEMBERS AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WHETHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, COUNSELORS, OR SERVING IN ANY OTHER FACULTY CAPACITY:

Are enthusiastic about their work.

Set challenging individual and collective performance goals for themselves.

Set challenging performance goals for students.

Are committed to education as a profession.

Project a positive attitude about students' ability to learn.

Display behavior consistent with professional ethics.

Regard students as individuals operating in a broader perspective beyond the classroom.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

EXCELLENT FACULTY MEMBERS AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WHETHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, COUNSELORS, OR SERVING IN ANY OTHER CAPACITY:

Treat all individuals with respect.

Respect diverse talents.

Work collaboratively with colleagues.

Are available to students.

Listen attentively to what students say.

Are responsive to student needs.

Are fair in their evaluations of student progress.

Present ideas clearly.

Create a climate that is conducive to learning.

KNOWLEDGE BASE

EXCELLENT FACULTY MEMBERS AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WHETHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, COUNSELORS OR SERVING IN ANY OTHER CAPACITY:

Knowledgeable about their work areas and disciplines.

Are knowledgeable about how students learn.

Integrate current subject matter into their work.

Provide perspectives that include a respect for diverse views.

Do their work in a well-prepared and well-organized manner.

APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE BASE

EXCELLENT FACULTY MEMBERS AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WHETHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, COUNSELORS, OR SERVING IN ANY OTHER CAPACITY:

Provide students with alternative ways of learning.

Stimulate intellectual curiosity.

Encourage independent thinking.

Encourage students to be analytical listeners.

Provide cooperative learning opportunities for students.

Give constructive feedback promptly to students.

Give consideration to feedback from students and others.

Provide clear and substantial evidence that students have learned.

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